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ZOLA,

The Old Trapper's Daughter.

A STORY OF THE SOUTHWEST.

By R. T. EMMET,

Author of "Partners," "Room No. 67," "Pete Walsh, the Western Detective," etc., etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE OLD TRAPPER AND HIS PARD—THE APACHE CHIEF, FLYING HORSE.

It was near the close of a beautiful Autumn day, not many years since, when two men stood leaning on their rifles, near the bank of the Rio Hondo, in the great territory of New Mexico.

They were conversing earnestly together.

The first was a man of at least sixty-two years, and yet so well was he preserved that his tall form was still unbent by the hand of time, his limbs were strong and active, his face had not too many wrinkles, and even his head and beard could boast of a goodly number of black hairs among the profusion of gray.

He was dressed in a complete suit of buckskin, and wore a fur cap with a long bushy tail depending behind.

He was well armed, for in addition to a breech-loading rifle, upon which he was leaning, he carried a brace of revolvers and a heavy bowie knife, all of which weapons, it was easy to understand, after one look into his firm and intelligent face, he knew exactly how to use.

His companion, though a younger man by nine years, looked fully as old as him we have described, and his scanty head of hair, and his long full beard, were and had been for many years perfectly white, or rather gray. It was to this fact he owed the name by which he was known throughout all the southwestern country, Gray Giles.

In dress and general appearance Gray Giles resembled his older companion very much. The greatest difference being that he was considerably shorter as well as grayer.

The eyes of both were fixed on the river.

The elder was speaking.

"Then ther canoe war goin' down the river toward San Jose?"

"Yes, Sol, it war," responded his companion.

"An' ther Injuns war Apaches an' no mistake?"

"Yes, Sol, thar's no mistake 'bout that; I know ther critters well enough."

"In course, in course, Giles, an' now ther question is, shall we keep on up stream an' see what the pesky demons have been about thar, or shall we push on down towards San Jose, an' warn 'em o' what they may expect?"

"Can't see what's ther use o' goin' down stream," said Gray Giles, with a grave shake of the head, "We hain't got no horses nor canoes nuther, an' ther Apaches have got both, an' what hain't gone by way o' ther water, has gone on them thunderin' ponies o' theirs."

"Then you think we'd better go up towards ther fort?"

"I do, fur a fact, Sol."

"Yer think thar's more o' ther critters up that-a-way?" and Sol waved his hand toward the source of the river.

"I do, pard," and the other's tone and manner were very serious.

"Yer don't reckon as how ther varmints has been nigh my shanty, do yer?" cried Sol, in evident alarm, as a terrible thought seized him.

"Thar's no tellin' what ther critters has done, or will do. You know ez well ez I, Sol, when they gits onto ther war-wath, they is jist like demons broke loose from ther infarnal regions; ter my mind they beats all ther redskins this side o' kingdom come."

"Yer right, pard," said Sol Swayne, in a firm voice, "an' hyers what's goin' ter make tracks fur hum to onet, an' when I get thar, if I find they've touched one o' my chicks, woe be to 'em; fur I'll never stop so long ez thar's an Apache on top o' ther 'arth."

"An' I'm with yer, every time, pard," said Gray Giles in an earnest tone, as he extended his honest hand to his companion, "yer know that 'thout my tellin' yer."

"I do," exclaimed Sol, grasping the outstretched hand, "an' I know yer love them as belongs ter me amost ez well ez I love 'em myself."

"Yer say no mor'n ther truth when yer say that," returned Giles. "Ef ennything should happen ter little Zola, I never cud be happy agin."

"Come, then," cried the other, in a nervous, anxious tone, "let's be goin'," and shouldering their rifles, they started off, up the river, in the direction of Fort Stanton.

The sound of their retreating footsteps had scarcely died away—indeed had *not* died away, when there was a slight movement in a little clump of underbrush, close to the river bank, and the next moment a dusky form emerged into full view.

It was an Apache Indian, and one of the noblest looking men of his tribe.

Standing erect, he would have measured some inches above six feet, and he was well proportioned.

On his head he wore a kind of helmet, made of buckskin, ornamented with a long feather. This denoted that he was a chief, or captain, of a band.

His feet were small—a peculiarity of the Apaches, resulting from the wearing of high moccasins of buckskin, and in a pair of which his were now encased.

He wore leather leggings, and upper garments of bright-colored cloth.

He was armed with a first-class rifle, a knife and a tomahawk.

For a moment he stood irresolute, watching the retreating figures, then, raising his rifle, he took careful aim at the head of the old trapper, Sol Swayne.

But he did not fire. All at once he lowered the piece, and then throwing it to the ground, disappeared in the underbrush from whence he had just emerged.

He was gone scarcely an instant, and when he reappeared, was armed with a powerful bow and a number of long, slender arrows, pointed with iron.

One of these he quickly fitted to the bow, and then taking aim, sent it on its cruel mission.

It reached its mark, and with a sharp cry of pain, Sol Swayne, the trapper, staggered forward and fell to the ground.

Gray Giles, on seeing his beloved companion fall, turned, with a bitter oath upon his lips.

Instantly his sharp eyes caught sight of the Apache chief, just as he was attempting to retreat to the underbrush.

"Flying Horse!" he exclaimed, with anger and surprise, and like lightning he raised his rifle and fired.

The Indian chief clapped his hand to his side, and without permitting a sound to escape his lips, staggered on toward the cover.

"Hit! by ther livin' Jingo!" exclaimed Giles, exultantly, and he rushed toward the chief's hiding-place to finish the good work.

He had almost reached it when the wounded Apache, mounted on a small pony, capable of great endurance, dashed from cover, and made off down the river at a tremendous rate.

Gray Giles fired a parting shot after him, but without effect, and then, with a muttered curse at his ill-luck, returned to his prostrate companion.

He found old Sol just where he left him, and suffering great pain from his wound, which was really a dangerous one.

After examining it carefully Giles picked up his heavy companion in his strong arms, and carried him to a shady spot, close the banks of the river. He then skillfully, but not without great difficulty cut out the arrow head and dressed the wound.

"Now, old pard," he said, when the surgical operation was completed, "we'll jist hev ter find er hidin' place hyer or hyerabouts, 'cause yer can't travel fur a day or two with that thar hole inter yer no how."

"Ah! Zola, poor Zola, what will become o' her, an' ther boy an' ther ole woman!" groaned the old trapper, as he endeavored to raise himself upon his feet.

"Don't yer fret about 'em now, pard," said Giles, in as cheerful a tone as he could assume, "'cause why? 'twont do no good, an' in a day or so, ye'll be all right, then we'll dig over ther ground thar like er house er fire."

"I don't know, I don't know about it," groaned poor Sol.

"Here," said Giles, helping him to stand up, and taking his rifle, "jist you lean on ter me, I'll pilot yer to a place thar yer'll soon come out all right," and as the wounded trapper leaned heavily on the arm of his friend, the two slowly disappeared in the thick undergrowth beyond.

CHAPTER II.

ATTACK ON THE OLD TRAPPER'S SHANTY—IN A TIGHT FIX.

ON the peninsula of land formed by the Hondo, and one of its branches, in a south-easterly direction from Fort Stanton, and many a weary mile from the spot where the old trapper lay wounded, was the shanty that sheltered his little family, consisting of his wife, a woman not yet fifty, his daughter Zola, a beautiful girl of nearly sixteen, and her brother Ned, a brave boy, who was about a year younger.

Their nearest neighbors was the Brownlow family, which included, besides the father and mother, two boys, one, Burton, who was nearly seventeen, and who was acknowledged to be the smartest and bravest boy in all that region, the other, Jack, a good-natured, but mischievous chap of less than fifteen years.

There was one other member of this household. It was a boy named Stan, a negro boy, about sixteen years old, and black as the ace of spades.

It was on the third day after the Apache chief had wounded old Sol, when Burton Brownlow, or Bold Burt, as

he was called by all who knew him, came rushing into the trapper's shanty, closely followed by his brother Jack and the darky Scip.

All three were laboring under the greatest excitement. "What is it—what is it?" cried Zola, hastily, she being at the time the only inmate of the house.

"Indians, Zola, Indians!" said Burt; "quick! you must get away from here at once."

"But my mother and Ned!" exclaimed the girl, "I can't go without them."

"Where are they?" asked Burt, hurriedly.

"They have gone to the upper field, and—"

"Fore de Lord, Mas'r Burt!" cried Scip, who was sick with terror, we must hurry, or dem Injuns will be hyer sure."

At that moment, as if the savages had had a secret understanding with Scip, a terrible howl went up.

"Oh, come!" cried Zola, "let us hurry to the place where mother and Ned are, and then all flee together!" and at once all four, leaving by the back door, rushed off in the direction of the woods beyond.

The shanty concealing their movements from the Indians, their flight was not observed, and so they reached the shelter of the forest without being immediately followed.

"Where are your father and mother?" asked Zola, when they stopped for a moment.

"They became separated from us on the way to your house," said Burt, "but I hope—I am almost sure, they have eluded the savages."

"Oh, look! look!" suddenly exclaimed Jack, pointing toward the old trapper's home. It was in a bright blaze, and a party of more than fifty redskins were dancing about it.

But this was not the worst. Bold Burt soon saw that the country was full of Indians, and that their retreat was more than likely to be cut off.

He had hardly come to this conclusion when he saw a party of about a dozen savages coming toward the very point where they were concealed.

About a dozen yards beyond them was a dense thicket. Grasping Zola by the arm, and telling the others to follow, he pushed toward it.

A moment later they were hid in the thick bushes.

Whether they had been seen by the Indians or not, they had no way of knowing, but their only hope of safety now lay in absolute stillness.

They crouched down together and kept silent.

"What's we gwine ter do hyer, enny how. I'd like furter know," whispered Scip. "Whar's we gwine, Mas'r Burt?"

"Dry up," said Burt, shortly. He was too much absorbed in thinking of a plan to save his fair companion and brother to listen patiently to the darkey.

"But, I say, Mas'r Burt," began Scip again.

"Shut up, Scip," whispered Jack, punching him in the ribs. "If you keep on talking that Indian 'll see us," and he pointed to one who was but a little way from them and slowly approaching.

"Goramity!" exclaimed the frightened darkey, in an undertone, sad he never opened his head again so long as there was an Indian in sight.

The dozen or more savages who had drawn so near the thicket that concealed the little party had passed on without examining it, and for a time Burt breathed freely again.

Scip was quick to notice the danger was over, at least, for a brief period, and at once found the use of his tongue.

"Ain't yer gwine now, Mas'r Burt?" he asked.

"Where should we go to?" demanded Bold Burt, somewhat impatiently.

To de fort, in course," said Scip.

"That never 'd do," responded Burt, with a thoughtful shake of the head; "at any rate, not now."

"Why can't we go to de fort now, Mas'r Burt, or leastways, as soon as de Injuns goes away?" persisted Scip.

"Because," responded the thoughtful boy, "the Indians

will be on the lookout, and the moment we take the trail, they'll be down upon us, and cut our throats. Just think of that?"

"Ugh!" grunted Scip, with chattering teeth.

All this time Zola was closely watching the red fiends about her burning home.

"You're right, Burt," she said, presently, "the Indians are not going away, they're going to camp near the shanty. Look, they are getting ready for it now. Yes, and here comes some more."

"I should say so!" exclaimed Burt, starting up, quickly, "and if we don't dig out of here, they'll be right on top of us. Come! Come, as fast as possible—don't make the slightest noise, but follow me."

"They'll see us, Burt. Sure as fate, they'll see us," said Jack, hurriedly.

"Crawl on your hands and knees, and don't raise your heads," answered his brother.

"Remember that, Scip," said Jack, impressively, "don't raise your black head, if you do you'll jest git daylight blown through it in no time. Do you hear?"

"Spect I does, Mas'r Jack," grunted the poor nigger.

"An' I'll jist keep it clus to de ground, see 'fi don't."

They now began to crawl rapidly along under cover of the thicket and long grass.

"Oh, lordy! lordy!" groaned the old darkey, all of a sudden, and then dropped all in a heap.

"What the deuce, is the matter now?" asked Burt, anxiously, again turning back.

"Mass'r Burt dey's Injuns right ahead'n us now, an' a comin' straight torge us, too. Goramity, look dar."

Bold Burt looked. Sure enough! he saw a large body of Indians just in front of him, and coming directly towards the burning shanty.

He and those with him were cut off between two bodies of the cruel Apaches!

"Lie down and keep perfectly quiet," he whispered.

"It's all we can do now—and ten to one we shall be found and murdered any way."

CHAPTER III.

SCIP FRIGHTENED—BOLD BURT FORMS A RESOLUTION.

As the little party lay concealed between the two bands of cruel savages they thought of many things. Zola wondered what had become of her good mother and dear brother Ned, and she wished her brave father might come with other trappers and drive the redskins away.

Bold Burt was also thinking of his parents, and it was with a gloomy brow that he remembered where he saw them last. He was obliged to acknowledge to himself that if they escaped it would be by a miracle.

"They are dead," he murmured to himself; "and, alas! I fear we shall all be before night comes."

Nearer and nearer came the Indians on their way to join the band about the still burning shanty.

Burt and his little party lay close to the ground and scarcely dared to breathe.

The savages, anxious to join their friends, hurried forward, passing within a few feet of the young people, and, fortunately, without even suspecting they were there.

The fire burned lower and lower, and the once happy home was now little more than a heap of ashes.

"We mustn't stay here any longer," said Burt, suddenly; "those red demons are working round this way, and'll find us, sure. Crawl on your hands and knees, all of you, and follow me."

"Whar's ye gwine ter now, Mas'r Burt?" demanded Scip, shoving his head forward like a turtle.

"Shut up! and draw that black head of yours in," exclaimed Jack, giving Scip a sharp rap over the pate.

Scip drew in his head, but didn't appear to know he had been struck.

For some little time they now moved forward in silence.

At length Scip could stand it no longer, and again began pestering Burt with questions.

The young leader of the party paid no attention to him whatever.

But Scip was bound to find out something from somebody, and as Burt wouldn't answer him he concluded Zola was the most promising person present, so, crawling as near to her as possible, he began:

"I say, Miss Zola—"

"Well, Scip, what is it?" asked the young girl.

"Does you know whar Mas'r Burt's a-takin' us to, an' what he's a-gwine to do wid us when he gits dar?"

"No, to be sure, I don't," said Zola, quietly.

"Wal, den, I reckon—" began Scip.

But Burt put a sudden stop to the conversation in these words:

"I reckon too, Scip, and what I reckon is, that, unless you keep that big mouth of yours shut, you'll get the whole top of your head taken off."

"Oh, Lordy!" groaned the nigger, and once more became silent.

They traveled on in the uncomfortable positions they had assumed, until they could no longer hear the yells of the savages, or see the light of the dying fire, and then Burt called a halt.

Hours had passed since they had fled from the shanty, and it was now close on to midnight.

"Here is as good a place as any to spend the remainder of the night," said the young leader, "and we must keep as still as possible. If necessary we can stay here all day to-morrow, and to-morrow night we can try to work our way up the river to Fort Stanton."

"How far is it to Fort Hamilton, Burt?" asked Jack, who had a great horror of walking. If he'd only had his tough little Apache pony with him he wouldn't have cared if it had been a hundred miles.

"I don't know exactly," answered Burt, "but certainly more than twenty miles, and it may be more than twenty-five."

"But you've been there."

"Of course, several times; but I'm thinking now of the way we shall be obliged to take."

"Jis le's go right away on now, Mas'r Burt," said Scip, with chattering teeth, "'cause I'se afeard to stay here any mo'."

"We can't do it," said Burt, decidedly. "Zola here, is quite tired, and I would never permit her to walk all the way to Fort Stanton. Besides, I have my reasons for waiting a little longer. This party'll want to eat before long, and they can't do that very well unless we have meat or something to kill it with."

"That's so," muttered Jack.

"Now, you three stay right here until I come back," continued Burt; "you are safe enough in this place, and I know the spot well. I shall be with you again inside of two hours at the longest."

"Are you really going?" asked Zola, anxiously.

"I must, for your sake, if for no other reason," responded the young man tenderly.

"Goramity! Mas'r Burt, jis, jis s'posin' dem Injuns tooks yer ha'r off, what'll yer do then, hey?"

"There's no use supposing anything of the kind," laughed Burt, "it's a well-known fact, and you ought to know it, the Apaches never cut hair Indian fashion."

"Don't never take scalps?"

"No."

"What dey do, then?"

"They take the whole head," laughed Burt; "I thought I told you that before."

"Ugh!" grunted Scip, and rolling over, he buried his face in the ground. When he looked up again Burt was gone.

CHAPTER IV.

BOLD BURT PROVES HIMSELF WORTHY OF HIS NAME.

On leaving the little party, Bold Burt had made up his mind just what he would do, and he at once directed his course toward the burned shanty.

At length, after a weary half hour, he came in sight of the place. The Indians were all asleep save two.

One of these was seated with his back resting against a tree; the other was walking up and down in front of a camp fire which had been recently kindled.

Bold Burt looked cautiously about him.

About a dozen steps from where he stood, but in plain sight of the two guards, there was an Indian sleeping, whose rifle lay by his side, along with a belt of cartridges, and Burt saw a keen-edged knife and tomahawk in the belt about his waist.

If he could only get to that savage without being seen! But he must wait.

Time was precious, however, and he must not remain idle, so retreating into the woods, he began a careful search. At length he found what he wanted, the Apaches' ponies.

Two of these he made ready for his return journey, and then again approached the camp-fire.

The Indian who had been walking up and down, had thrown himself upon the ground and drawn his blanket well up over his head. The other, with his back against the tree, sat there as calm and unmoved as ever.

There was nothing for it, he must wait.

Half an hour passed; the guard on the ground was fast asleep. The one against the tree was dozing.

Bold Burt would wait no longer.

He emerged from his hiding place. Rapidly he advanced to where the first Indian lay sleeping. He reached his side. Like lightning he drew his knife from his belt and plunged it into his heart.

The dying savage uttered a faint sigh. Bold Burt instantly dropped to the ground.

The guard dozing against the tree roused himself a little, as if to listen, but the next moment his head fell forward again, and he thought no more of what was passing about him.

The daring boy waited fully five minutes, then slowly raising himself up he secured the dead warrior's weapons, and grasping the tomahawk in his hand, advanced toward the tree.

He reached it.

The Indian moved uneasily, as if about to awake.

Bold Burt approached him from behind and raised the tomahawk.

Again the savage stirred.

In life he never moved again.

The terrible weapon descended, and was buried in his brain.

The dead guard fell forward toward the fire, and in falling struck his sleeping companion's foot.

Instantly the other guard started up. But already Bold Burt was upon him, and before he could gain his feet, he received a terrible blow upon the head that stretched him beside his dead friend.

One more blow and he was dead, then Burt secured their knives and tomahawks and once more started for the ponies, picking up the rifle and cartridge belt, which he had already secured by the way.

He reached the ponies without accident, and mounting one, led the other, taking, as he thought, a route from the camp by which he would not be likely to meet any of the enemy.

He had gone some distance, and was just congratulating himself that he was now free from all danger, when, all at once, an Indian sprang up in his path, just ahead of him.

"Ugh!" grunted the Apache. "Where go?"

Bold Burt felt that he had not time to answer, but quick as though, he raised his rifle and fired.

The inquisitive Indian fell dead, but the report of Burt's rifle brought the whole Apache camp about his ears.

Wild yells filled the air as the savages started up and found that a deadly enemy had been in their very midst.

Then, as they caught sight of the fleeing boy, their yells were redoubled.

"Crack! crack! crack!" rang out their rifles, and the whistling bullets passed uncomfortably near the brave fellow's head.

At length a dozen or more, who had found their ponies, came rushing forward, and then the chase began in dead earnest.

Shot after shot was fired, but happily none took effect, still the pursuers were drawing uncomfortably near.

All at once Burt turned in his saddle and fired at the foremost.

He dropped to the ground like a lump of lead.

The next moment a dozen shots were fired at the brave boy.

This time he was not so fortunate. His horse was shot under him, and he received a severe wound in the left leg.

Bold Burt was now in a very unpleasant as well as critical situation; but he did not hesitate for a single moment.

His horse had dropped to the ground, and his enemies, with wild and exultant shouts, were rushing forward.

In an instant he freed himself from the dying horse, and notwithstanding his wounded leg, sprang upon the back of the other, and with an answering shout of defiance, was off like the wind.

The Indians kept up the chase for some time, but soon they lost sight of the fugitive in the darkness, and were obliged to return to the camp empty handed.

It was with astonishment that the chief of the party looked upon the work of this one boy. In a few moments he had killed no less than five braves, besides making off with two of the best ponies and a quantity of weapons.

In sullen silence he listened to the report of the unsuccessful pursuers, and then, with an expressive gesture, he said:

"Sleep now. To-morrow he must die!"

CHAPTER V.

ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER—BURT'S WOUND.

Having got rid of his pursuers, Bold Burt made the best of his way to where his father's shanty had stood, in hopes of finding something to eat.

The place, as he had expected, was a heap of ruins, but amidst the rubbish about the smoke-house he found a ham, and with this and a quantity of sweet corn he returned to his little party.

They welcomed him with the wildest joy. He had been gone so long they feared some fatal accident had happened.

"Eat now," said Burt, as soon as he could get in a word, and then we must leave this place."

"Leave it?" asked Jack. "I thought you said we were to stay here until morning."

"So I did, but there are two reasons why we must get away before."

"And what are they?"

"As soon as it is daylight the Indians would be down upon us here, and then, if we should wait until that time, I couldn't get away at all."

"What do you mean?" asked Zola, hastily.

"I'm quite badly wounded, so you see the necessity of our finding a safe retreat without delay."

Bold Burt spoke calmly about his wound, as though it was nothing to cause alarm, but Zola started up at once.

"Wounded!" she exclaimed, "you wounded? For mercy sake, let us do something for you at once."

"There is nothing you can do at this moment but eat and get ready as soon as possible to accompany me to a safer place."

"Then we will do it at once," said Zola, decidedly, and

she herself divided the corn and cut slices from the ham, until all declared they had had enough.

"And now where shall we go?" she asked, when the remainder of the ham had been tied to the pony's saddle for transportation.

"I know a place up the river a short distance," said Burt, "and if we can only manage to get there, we shall be perfectly safe for a week or even for ten years, if the redskins should stay about that long."

"O Lordy! Mas'r Burt, what fur yer didn't say so before? Le's go dar right-er way," and Scip started up eagerly.

"I'm perfectly willing; in fact, that's just what I want," laughed Burt; "but you fellows will have to help me onto the horse; I'm awful sorry the rest will have to walk."

"Don't mind us at all," said Zola, cheerfully. "For my part, I'd quite as soon walk as ride."

Soon the little party was again on its way, and now they took a trail that led almost directly to the river. Before they reached it, however, they turned a little toward the west, and then came on in a straight line for nearly two miles; at length they turned south, and, after traveling for half a mile, struck the river at a point where it looked both broad and deep.

The bank was lined with trees, some of them many feet in diameter, and towering upwards for hundreds of feet.

Many of these were so close to the river bank that the earth had been washed away from about their roots, and thus, into one of the largest, Burt had one day discovered a singular passage up into the hollow trunk.

It was in this hollow tree, with its novel opening so close to the ground, that he had resolved to find a hiding-place for his little party.

He could not have done better, even an Indian would never have thought of looking there.

But the place would have to have some fixing up before it would be fit to occupy, and so they resolved to camp on the river bank until morning.

The young leader of the party was now suffering considerable pain from his wound, besides feeling quite weak from loss of blood.

He stretched himself upon the ground, and presently a low moan escaped him.

Zola was at his side in a moment.

"Dear old Burt!" she exclaimed, "what can I do for you?"

"I wish the wound might be bathed," he said, "then the flow of blood must be stopped and my leg bound up."

"I will do it all," said the brave girl; "Scip, you bring me a hat full of water, and Jack instantly became very thoughtful."

Presently he uttered a sigh of relief, and in a confident tone said:

"I think I know where there's just such a piece of cotton cloth as you want, Zola."

"Good!" exclaimed the girl, "I was sure you would be able to find what I wanted, now go and get it at once."

Jack hastened away into darkest shadow of the forest.

He was not gone long, but when he returned he had a quantity of cloth fit for bandages in his hands.

"A thousand thanks, Jack," said Zola, and if he could only have seen his brother's face, he would have seen a look of gratitude there as well.

The wounded limb was now washed and dressed as well as it could be in the dark, and Burt declared himself quite comfortable.

Zola wished to sit up and watch by his side, but this he would not permit. He made her lie down on a soft bed of moss and leaves that the two younger boys procured for the purpose.

Soon all were asleep but Burt—there was too much on his mind to let him sleep. He saw at a glance that there were days of anxiety and suffering before him, and he could not tell what the end would be.

CHAPTER VI.

PREPARING DINNER—"DE INJUNS HAB COME!"

THE morning came, and the little party was soon astir. Burt found that his leg was very much swollen, and exceedingly painful, but he resolved not to think of himself until those depending in a great measure on his judgment were properly cared for.

He made a careful examination of his hollow tree.

The sandy soil had been gradually washed out from under its great trunk, so that many of its roots were exposed, and between two of the largest of these was the opening through which they must crawl to the interior.

Once inside they found themselves in a circular room more than eight feet in diameter and of immeasurable height.

On the lower side—that is the side toward the river—the ground was low and damp, but the upper side was much higher and quite dry. Indeed, it was like a great shelf, and here Burt resolved should be their sleeping apartments.

He also determined that the lower part, or living room, as he called it, should be made more comfortable, and to this end he set the boys to work at once.

Clean dry sand was carried in, and the floor made level and smooth. Then plenty of moss and leaves were piled up for beds and places to sit upon.

When all this had been accomplished, Zola declared the place perfect. Only, she said, she wished she could have a little room by herself.

Burt told her that if they were obliged to stay there long, she should, as one of the trees close by was hollow, and could easily be fixed in the same way, with a passage leading from this one into it.

Zola declared that would be delightful, and Burt secretly resolved it should be accomplished within the next two days.

He had another reason for wishing to have a more secret hiding place, with a narrow passage leading into it. He thought if the Indians should succeed in following their trail, and should find their house in the first tree, they could all retreat to the other, and that the enemy would be hardly likely to find them there.

That morning they made breakfast off from the ham, and then Jack, by Burt's orders, swam the river with the pony and turned him loose on the other side, where he would not be likely to attract the Indians' attention.

After he had thus disposed of the pony, Jack returned to his friends.

Burt was now so sick and weak that he could no longer be of any service to his friends, except in the way of advice.

By his order, at about nine o'clock, Scip climbed a tall tree and took a look at the surrounding country. When he came down he reported that there was no Indians in the neighborhood, but that there were "heaps an' heaps on 'em down dar by Mas'r Swayne's place."

"Then you two go out and find something fit to eat," said Burt, "but be mighty careful and don't run into any kind of danger."

The boys promised, and went off. An hour later they returned, Scip with a good fat rabbit, and Jack with a string of fish.

"Hum," muttered Burt, when he saw their game, "these things must be cooked, for I take it, none of us could eat them raw very well. Let me see how you can manage it. Ah, I have it," he said suddenly. "There's a spring down on the lower bluff, and a fire down there won't make much smoke, at least, I don't think enough so that it would be noticed above the tree tops."

"You must make the fire out of drift-wood—perfectly dry, mind—and you mustn't use any pine. Wet wood and pine smoke too much."

"One of you must look out for the fire and do the cooking, while the other keeps a careful watch for Indians, and for that matter, some one ought to be on the lookout

for savages the whole time; or at least, during the day, for at night we are hardly likely to be disturbed."

"One moment," said Zola; "if Jack will start the fire, I'll do the cooking, and that will give Scip all his time to watch the camp."

"Very good," said Burt, "and now mind, Scip, if you see the least signs of savages, hurry to Jack and Zola, and then all three of you must hasten here, and get out of sight as speedily as possible."

"But, Mas'r Burt, jist s'posin' dey does see us, what den?" asked Scip.

"Why, run behind the trees, and then crawl in here just the same. Naturally they'll hunt for you in the woods somewhere. They'll never think of looking in here."

"How shall I build the fire, Burt?" asked Jack.

"Make an earth oven—that's the best way—then we are sure to get all there is worth having in the food."

"I understand, and Zola and I will soon have a dinner ready for you fit for a king," said Jack.

"I have not the slightest doubt of it," said Burt, with a smile.

"Well, are we ready to go out now," asked Zola.

"Wait a moment," said Burt, hastily; "let us be sure that the coast is clear. One of you boys climb a tree and take another look."

"I'll go," said Jack, and away he sped.

He returned after an absence of about ten minutes and reported that there were no Indians in sight, and that he could see no signs of any.

"Then go and make your fire and get the food into the oven," said Burt. "When you have done that much you had better come back, for it will cook as well by itself as it would if you were watching it."

"All right," said Jack, and the three went out, leaving poor Burt all alone.

The poor fellow now permitted himself the luxury of a groan, a thing he had carefully avoided while the others were near, for he did not wish them to know how much he was suffering.

Jack dug the oven and made the fire, while Zola prepared the rabbit and fish.

By the time these were ready the oven was heated and ready to receive them. They placed them inside, and carefully covering them over, left them to cook, and returned to the tree-house.

After a proper time Zola declared the rabbit and fish must be done, and started to go out and fetch it in.

"No, no, Zola," said Jack; "you just stay here and let me go. I know how to manage this thing."

"And so do I," laughed the girl.

"You stay here," said Burt. "Let Jack play servant for once, and dish up the dinner." So she staid, and Jack hurried off.

Both he and Scip made their appearance about five minutes later, the first very much agitated, and the last of a sort of slate color, that the darkies call pale.

Scip fell all in a heap upon the ground, and began to tremble in every limb. Jack, who, notwithstanding his evident fright, had carefully brought in the dinner, now placed it upon the shelf of earth, and then rapidly climbed up after it.

"Come! come!" he whispered eagerly to Zola, who was in the lower part of the room, "come up here, or they'll see you between the roots."

"What is it, Jack?" asked Burt, anxiously, as he raised himself up.

"Oh, Lordy! Mas'r Burt," groaned poor Scip, "de Injuns hab come! de Injuns hab come!"

CHAPTER VII.

JACK TAKES AN OBSERVATION—A DISPATCH FROM THE LOOK-OUT.

"CLIMB up here, you charcoal sketch, and don't make so much noise," said Burt, "or, if they are within ten miles, they will come in earnest."

Scip hastened to climb up to where Burt was lying, and with chattering teeth, exclaimed:

"But I tell yer, Mas'r Burt, dey *hab* come already. Dey's out hyer, right now, close down to de ribber."

"Is that so, Jack?" asked Burt, turning to his brother.

"Yes, Burt; there's thirty or forty of them coming up the river bank," said Jack, "and I had to run for it, I can tell you."

Burt turned pale.

"Coming up the river bank, you say? Then they'll be sure to see the ashes of our fire and the oven, and that will give us dead away."

"You're a little out there, old fellow," said Jack, with an air of importance. "I know I ain't so old nor so smart as you, but I know a thing or two, I reckon."

Burt began to take hope.

"What did you do, Jack?" he asked.

"Why, the moment I got the rabbit and fish out of the hole, I shoved all the ashes into it, and then covered it up. After that I covered the spot with leaves and threw a little water over them. It was just as I had done this that Scip told me about the Indians."

"Jack!" exclaimed his brother, stretching out his hand, "you're a regular trump, and I'm proud of you."

Jack grasped his wounded brother's hand, and felt as happy as a lord, for he knew that Burt meant every word he said. The fact is, he never said anything he didn't mean.

For a few moments all was silent in the tree-house. Burt wanted time to think.

At last he said, in a whisper:

"I believe the best thing we can do is to eat our dinner; we shall feel better and stronger for it, and we may not get so good a chance again. Besides, I think we must all be hungry."

At first it was hard work for poor Scip to eat, but presently, seeing that he was not likely to get his share unless he put in for it, he went to work, and quickly forgetting the danger with which he was surrounded, came out first best in the contest.

The rabbit and fish really made a very savory dish, and even Burt enjoyed it hugely. It restored him, in a measure, to something like his customary strength, and he soon grew anxious to know what the redskins were up to.

But after thinking of it carefully, he decided that it would be a very dangerous undertaking to venture forth from the tree.

"I wish I knew what they were up to," he said to himself for about the twentieth time.

Jack, at this moment, happened to be lying on his back by his brother's side, with his eyes fixed on a point more than fifty feet above their heads.

"You would really like to know, old fellow?" he said.

"Of course I would," responded Burt, regretfully.

"All right, you shall know," said Jack, in a decided tone.

"You mustn't think of going out," exclaimed Burt, starting up.

"Such an idea never entered my brilliant brain," laughed his brother.

"Then how do you propose to obtain the desired information?" asked the wounded youth.

"You will see in about a moment, if you'll have the goodness to lend me your knife," responded Jack.

"But I gave you one last night, as well as Scip."

"Yes; and that's all right, but just at this moment I want two."

"All right, take mine then," and Jack, having secured his brother's knife, now began to work it into the side of the tree, almost fifty feet below the hole that he had observed while lying on his back.

When he found that the knife would bear his weight, he worked in the other, some feet above it, and then, raising himself on the handle of the lower knife, and holding on by the other, he requested Scip to give him the third, and this he thrust into the tree higher up.

He now withdrew the lowest knife, and raising himself

so as to hold on by the upper, he thrust the one he had just extracted into the tree still higher up.

And thus he continued to advance until the hollow opening grew so small that he no longer needed the knives, being able to work his way upward by pressing his knees against the sides of the tree.

At length he reached the opening, and found it much larger than he had supposed on seeing it from below.

He looked cautiously out. For some time he discovered nothing, but at length he saw the Indians encamped on the bank of the river not fifty feet from where he had built his oven.

Apparently they had no idea there was any one in the vicinity. They were cooking their dinner, and, Jack thought, making arrangements for fishing.

At first he thought he would go right down and make his report; but, after a moment, concluded to stay and see what they really did do.

His position was not the most comfortable in the world, and the first thing to do was to better it. This he did by taking the only one of the three knives he had brought up from the point where he no longer needed them, and thrusting it into the tree just below the hole, thus making a rest for his foot.

He now settled himself to keep a sharp lookout on the enemy.

Some time passed, and nothing of importance occurred. But while Jack fully understood the situation without, those below were wholly in the dark, and therefore anxious—not to say impatient.

After a while Burt could stand the suspense no longer, and, putting his hands to his mouth, he called in a loud whisper:

"What do you see, Jack?"

The hollow trunk of the tree made an excellent speaking tube, and Burt's words came up to Jack, clear and distinct.

He looked down, and waved his hand, then, after a moment's thought, he took a small piece of paper, which he happened to have in his pocket, and fishing out a blunt lead pencil, braced himself for the task, and wrote these words:

"Dear old Burt: The Indians are on the river bank—about fifty of them, I should think. They are cooking and eating dinner, and getting ready to go a fishing.

"They don't suspect we're around, that's plain enough, but I'm going to stay up here awhile to watch 'em.

"JACK."

Having finished this dispatch to the general officer, the man at the look-out broke a small piece off from the inside of the tree, and wrapping the paper around it, let it drop.

It struck Scip full in the face.

"Now dat's mighty careless," exclaimed the darky, picking it up. "S'posin' it had been heavy, it might-er done gone an' smashed my head in."

"Don't let that worry you, Scip," laughed Burt, "there ain't anything up there heavy enough to smash *your* head in."

"Don't know 'bout dat, Mas'r Burt," returned the nigger, with a grave shake of woolly pate, "speck my head's as soft as anybody's."

"I admit," laughed Burt, "that what's inside of it is soft enough, but the case—the covering of your precious brains—O, my!"

"Dar! now you jist done gone an' said 'nough, Mas'r Burt."

"That's so, Scip, and therefore I'll thank you to pass me Jack's note."

The black boy did so, and Burt opened and read it with eager interest.

"I'm inclined to think," he said, handing it to Zola, "that we shall not in any way be disturbed. I feel rather relieved."

"I hope you are right, Burt," said the young girl, "but

don't you think that by and by they'll notice our tracks along the river bank?"

"It's hardly likely," responded Burt, "for evidently they are looking for nothing of the kind."

"I am very glad to hear you say so," said Zola, "for I don't want them to come across us while you are 'sick and lame."

Burt did not answer; he was lost in thought, and it so happened that he was not the only one who was deeply thinking just at that time.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SECRET PASSAGE—JACK UNDERTAKES TO STOCK THE TREE-HOUSE.

JACK kept his eyes upon the band of redskins on the river bank.

They seemed in no hurry to finish their meal, and the boy's active mind looked for other employment while his eyes were on duty.

Suddenly a thought struck him. Evidently it was a big one, for he at once became wide awake, and began a more careful examination of the band than he had yet made.

At last the Indians finished eating, and while some went out to fish, others began to prepare for the night.

Jack waited until all their preparations were completed, and then descended to his friends.

Many were the questions asked and answered, and great was the praise bestowed upon Jack by his elder brother.

At length it began to grow dark, and Scip broadly hinted that he could make way with any remnants of the noonday meal there might be laying round.

"I think we'd better keep what we've got left until tomorrow," said Burt. "It may be these Indians will take it into their head to hang around here for three or four days, and then what should we do without any food?"

"Goramity! Mas'r Burt," exclaimed Scip, with startled countenance. "I can't go without somefin to eat, I's *got* ter hab it."

"All right then," responded Burt, carelessly; "go out and get it then."

"But Lordy, Mas'r Burt, dis nigger can't go out whar dem Injuns is."

"Well, then, don't say no more about eating to-night."

Scip gave a dismal groan.

"Thunder! Burt," laughed Jack, "let the poor fellow have a bite, and for that matter I wouldn't mind eating something myself; you needn't fret, old boy, I'll see that we have enough to eat and drink before morning."

"What do you mean?" asked Burt, in great surprise.

"O, nothing much," responded Jack, "only while I was up there"—and he waved his hand aloft—"I happened to think that if the Indians should stay around here very long, we should get pretty hard up for water, to say the least."

"That's a fact," murmured Burt, in a tone of great concern; "and I never once thought of it. I'm a perfect fool, and not fit to lead this party."

"Now don't you say that, old fellow," exclaimed Jack, warmly. "It's all right, I tell you, there's no kind of harm done. In an hour or so we shall have all the water we want and something good to eat too."

"I don't know what you propose to do, Jack," said his wounded brother, "but remember, I forbid you running into any kind of danger."

"That's all right, Burt, I'm not going to run into the slightest danger, I think too much of my precious skin that—you bet," and Jack laughed good-naturedly.

"Well, have your own way then," said Burt, and he sighed wearily.

"Den dis nigger kin hab some o' the rabbit, eh? Mas'r Burt."

"Yes," Jack answered for his brother, "and we'll all turn to and eat supper; but after that, mind! you've got to work."

"Work!" cried the darkey, "what we do, Jack?" and even Burt turned an inquiring look toward his brother.

"We're going to make a secret passage into the tree just above this, so that Zola can have a room by herself when she wants it, and so that we can have a place to retreat to, in case the Indians come uncomfortably near this one. And that ain't all," he continued. "I noticed from the lookout that there's a little stream running close by the other tree, on its way to the river. It wouldn't be five minutes' work to turn it so that it'll run through the lower part of the room here."

"Jack, I really didn't know there was so much to you," said Burt, approvingly.

"Ah, but you see you never gave me a chance before," laughed Jack; "and now you can't help yourself, you know."

"But can we do all this without attracting the Indians' attention?" asked Burt.

"Of course we can," said Jack. "I wouldn't undertake it otherwise."

"All right, we'll finish our supper and then go to work, for I mean to have a hand in this," declared the wounded boy.

"I'm willing, if it won't hurt your leg any," Jack said, as he attacked a piece of fish.

Supper was speedily finished, and then all four went to work in the dark on the secret passage.

It was a hard job, and they labored under great disadvantages, but they were determined, and then there was this in their favor, the second tree was not far away.

A little before midnight the narrow passage was completed, and Jack then went to work to turn the course of the shallow stream that ran near the second tree.

This was a very small matter, as he had only to remove some turf in one place and scrape up the sand a little in another.

Thus they soon had cool fresh water flowing through their very dwelling-place.

Zola's chamber, as they resolved to call it, could not very well be fitted up for her until daylight, so she determined to pass the remainder of the night in the first tree, where they now all returned save Jack, who, after he was satisfied that he had supplied the little company with water, started off in the darkness to obtain food, as he hastily informed Burt.

Jack, once alone, began with the utmost care to make his way towards the Indians' camp.

He was not long in coming within sight of it.

The fire was burning low, and all were, or seemed to be, asleep around it.

Jack had noticed where the savages placed their food, and by good luck it was at a point some distance from where any of them were lying.

He hastened to the spot. To his joy, he found plenty of Indian bread, a large piece of venison, and a good supply of other food. In fact enough to last him and his friends for a whole week at least.

He had now quite a job before him. He must carry off all these provisions and deposit them in the hollow tree, and that too without disturbing a single one of all the fifty sleeping savages.

At first he thought of calling Scip to his aid, but he almost immediately abandoned that idea, and went at it alone. Scip he thought might possibly slop over.

The venison was the first thing he tackled; he meant to make sure of that anyhow, and managed to get it to the tree without making the slightest sound.

He stopped at the entrance, and called, in a whisper:

"Scip! Scip!"

"What am it, Mas'r Jack?" and Scip's black face appeared in the opening.

Instantly his eyes rested on the deer-meat, and he could just make out what it was in the gloom.

"Oh, bress de Lord, Mas'r Jack, you makes me so happy. Jist han'dat right hyer," and taking the meat, he instantly disappeared into the interior of the tree.

Jack again started for the camp.

He soon reached it, all was quiet as before.

This time he secured all the Indian bread he could lug away, and this too he succeeded in placing in Scip's hands without rousing the sleeping enemy.

The third trip he carried off a mess of fish, the result of the savages' day's fishing.

But all know the old adage, "the pitcher that goes too often to the well," and so forth.

Jack had got along very well on his three trips, but the fourth did not work quite so smoothly.

CHAPTER IX.

JACK IS MET BY THE ENEMY AND WINS A VICTORY.

THE young purveyor had carted off all belonging to the Indians in the eating line, with the exception of some dried meat and a small quantity of bread. There was just about enough in all to make one good load for him.

Jack thought it would be a sin and shame to leave this for the wicked Indians, and so he resolved to carry it away.

He reached the spot, and stooping down, began gathering up the bread. All at once, as he was about to raise himself he found a heavy hand upon his shoulder, and heard a not over pleasant voice at his ear:

"Ugh! What do with that? Where go, eh?"

"Oh, Lord!" thought poor Jack to himself, "I'm a goner, sure! and now won't Burt give it to me!"

If the poor boy had only taken time to think, he would have been glad enough to have given his brother a chance to "give it to him."

But Jack for a moment was very much discouraged, not to say frightened.

The Indian who had captured him was a powerful fellow, and had a grip like a vise.

He lifted his captive from the ground as though he had been no more than a mere child. Jack expected every moment to hear him call his friends to his aid, but he did nothing of the kind. He calmly walked toward the river, still holding the boy almost at arm's length before him.

"Ugh! You know what Injun do?"

Jack intimated that he hadn't the slightest idea.

"Me kill you and throw into water!"

"Oh, don't do that!" exclaimed poor Jack. "Take some fellow of your size. It ain't fair to go for a little fellow like me."

The redskin let the boy stand on his feet. He seemed to be considering something.

At length he asked:

"Where one more boy?"

Jack knew well enough who he meant, but pretended not to understand.

"I don't know what you're driving at," he said.

"Where boy what stole the Injun's horse, and kill one--two--three--four--five, a heap?"

Jack shook his head.

"I give it up," he said.

"You tell, or me kill," said the Indian, threateningly.

Suddenly it struck Jack that, so long as they were alone, this killing business might be a game that two could play at. He had his knife with him, the Indian had not seen it yet, if he had, had paid no attention to it.

"You tell, or me kill--quick," said the savage, reaching down as if to seize him by the throat.

Quick as lightning the daring boy jerked out his knife, and plunged it into the other's heart.

The Indian fell forward upon the sand. Once he attempted to utter a warning cry to his friends, but Jack quickly put a stop to that, and in another moment he was dead.

For the first time in all his life Jack Brownlow had killed a human being, and now, as he stood there before the lifeless body, he trembled in every limb.

But Jack was not the boy to throw such a chance as he had just won away. He considered for a moment what it was best to do, and then he did it.

He took from the dead Indian all that was worth carrying away, and then tying a large stone about his neck, dragged him into the water and sunk him to the bottom.

He next secured his plunder, as well as the dried meat and bread. When these things had all been delivered over to Scip, another thought struck Jack, why could he not make it look as though the dead warrior had carried off all that he had taken?

He would try it.

Cautiously he returned to the camp. With the utmost care he obliterated all signs of the short strife on the river bank, then he went to the spot where the savage had seized him.

For some time he looked around for what he was in search of in vain; at last, however, he found it—a first-class rifle and all its belongings.

The tomahawk and knife belonging to the dead Indian he had already secured, and now, with this additional weapon, he returned to the tree house.

Scip was delighted with the prize. Zola was astonished. Burt had fallen into a light sleep, and it was thought not best to disturb him.

"Won't dem red niggers be jist hoppin' when dey finds out what we've done in de mornin', Mas'r Jack? Hey? I jist guess not."

"I expect they'll howl some," said Jack, with a self-satisfied smile. "And now, Scip," he added, "we must go to sleep, for I shouldn't wonder if we had to keep pretty wide awake to-morrow."

Five minutes later all was silent in the hollow tree—at least there was no other sound save that made by the breathing of the tired sleepers.

Hour after hour passed, and at length feeble rays of light found their way between the roots into the strange hiding-place, still no one moved; all continued quiet.

All at once there was a frightful noise without, as if a legion of demons had broken loose, and were making the most of their liberty.

Bold Burt started up and listened.

"What can it all be about, I wonder," he murmured aloud.

"I'm inclined to think they have discovered Jack's visit," said Zola, who was now also awake.

"Jack's visit?" repeated Burt, in surprise. "Didn't he promise me that he would not go into danger?"

"Yes," responded Zola, "and I don't suppose he had any idea of danger until long toward the last."

"What! did any harm overtake him?" asked Burt, anxiously.

"No—no! but he proved himself the prince of brave boys—a man, in fact; look there!" and Zola pointed out the captured rifle.

Burt's eyes glistened.

"It's a fact," he murmured; "I hadn't any idea there was so much in the boy."

All this time Jack and Scip had been quietly sleeping; but suddenly there came another wild yell that waked the very echoes of the mountains miles away.

Jack sat up and rubbed his eyes, Scip sprang to his feet as if some one had attacked him in the rear with a red-hot needle.

"Oh, Lordy, Mas'r Burt!" he exclaimed, "hab de debil cum fur us shuah?"

"He'll be here mighty soon, unless you keep a little more quiet," said Burt, significantly.

Scip at once subsided, and then Burt requested Jack to give an account of himself.

This the younger brother proceeded to do, faithfully relating all that had occurred from beginning to end.

Bold Burt did not speak for some moments after Jack had concluded his story.

At length he slowly said:

"I fear we shall have trouble out of this, and it may be trouble of a very serious character."

"What trouble can come to us now any more than yesterday?" asked Jack, in an incredulous tone.

Burt opened his mouth to answer, when a wild chorus of yells went up, so loud and so near as to drown his voice, and fill poor Scip with most abject fear.

CHAPTER X.

JACK MAKES ANOTHER RAID ON THE ENEMY'S CAMP.

ZOLA and Jack looked at Burt, inquiringly.

"No," said Burt, in answer to their looks; "they do not as yet suspect our retreat, but they have evidently discovered some signs that lead them to believe we are still in the neighborhood."

"Supposing I go up to the look-out?" said Jack.

"Not a bad idea," returned his brother; "but don't make the slightest noise in the ascent, for it's plain they are not far off."

Jack worked his way up to the hole in the same manner he had done the day before, and cautiously peered out.

The fifty Indians were scattered in every direction, and seemed as much excited as a swarm of bees that has lost its queen.

For more than an hour they wandered about, and many times Jack felt sure they had discovered the hiding-place, but each time, after approaching close to it, they went away, never once suspecting how near they had been to the game.

At length they all returned to the river bank, where a solemn council was held, after which, to all appearances, things settled down into the ordinary routine, and Jack, satisfied that the search was over for the time at least, descended and joined his friends.

The day passed without incident, other than that Jack and Scip fitted up Zola's chamber in the second tree, and made it ready for her reception.

That night the girl occupied her new quarters, and the boys lay themselves down to rest side by side.

Presently, after all had become still, Jack raised himself into a sitting position and listened.

Both his companions were fast asleep.

He quietly slipped from between them and reached the ground below.

He then armed himself with a knife and tomahawk and crawled into the open air.

Without the loss of a moment's time, he slipped into a clump of underbrush close by the trees, and listened with bated breath.

Not a sound reached him, not a figure was anywhere to be seen.

Silently, on his hands and knees, he crawled toward the camp.

On coming in sight of the fire he again stopped and concealed himself.

He now at his leisure examined the situation.

There was one Indian on guard, and he was seated before the fire, with his eyes fixed on the river; hence his face was turned away from Jack.

About ten feet from where the boy was concealed two savages were sleeping, each with a rifle by his side.

"I wish I could get at those rifles," thought Jack; but he hesitated when he noted the fact that the tireless watcher was only about thirty feet further off.

Presently he saw what he had not before noticed, a little heap of Indian blankets close beside the two sleepers.

"What a comfort a couple of those would be to dear old Burt and Zola!" he thought, and that thought decided him.

Throwing himself flat upon his belly, he began to slowly crawl toward the pile.

Once the watcher turned around, and then Jack, who had not taken his eyes off of him, for a single moment, lay as still as death.

At length he reached the blankets. They concealed him perfectly from the view of the guard. And, if he now wished, he could operate against the two Indians.

It was a dangerous undertaking, but he finally determined upon it.

From where he lay he could reach out his hand and touch the nearest.

He drew his keen-bladed knife. He thrust forth his hand. The next moment the Indian's throat was cut from ear to ear.

The victim shivered, and then lay perfectly still. It was the stillness of death.

Jack drew himself up behind the blankets and waited.

Once more the watcher by the fire turned his head toward the boy; but there was no suspicion in his face, and soon his glance returned to the river.

Jack waited for another moment, and then slowly crawled toward the remaining sleeper.

He reached his side. He cast his eyes in every direction. He listened intently.

Nothing suspicious could he see. Not a sound reached him.

The sleeping savage's breast was bare, and Jack could see the beating of his heart.

He raised the knife on high. It descended, and was buried to the very handle in his bosom.

He started up with a convulsive gasp and fell back dead.

The watcher by the fire turned quickly and cast an inquiring look toward the spot; but Jack was already lying beside the Indian whom he had just killed, and all seemed natural and peaceful.

But the watcher was not satisfied; he slowly arose and drew near the place.

Just before he reached it, something plunged into the river, and he at once turned and started in that direction.

Now was Jack's opportunity, and he instantly seized it.

His first care was to secure both the rifles and everything belonging to them. He next took two of the blankets, and with these things he managed to get back to the clump of underbrush before the guard again turned.

The great trouble now was to get back to the tree without being seen.

He saw at once that he could not hope to do this without leaving a part of his plunder behind, and after some moments of consideration, he determined to take the guns and equipments first.

It was some time before he dared to start, but at length he saw his opportunity, and seizing the rifles made his way to the tree.

He thrust his prizes inside, and then returned for the blankets. These, too, he safely delivered, and, growing bolder on account of his success, made another trip in order to secure a pair of blankets for himself and Scip.

This time he came very near overdoing it, escaping by the very skin of his teeth, but at length he arrived at the retreat with his plunder, and after throwing a blanket over each of the other boys, rolled himself up in one and went to sleep.

CHAPTER XI.

JACK A CAPTIVE—PREPARATIONS FOR THE AUTO DA FE.

THE next morning, if possible, there was more noise in the Apache camp than the day before, and once more Jack descended to the lookout.

His brother, whose leg was in a very bad condition, scolded him for his recklessness, and begged that he would be guided by him in the future. But success is usually a good excuse, and Jack got off pretty easy.

For almost two hours he watched the enemy, and then came down to inform his friends that they seemed on the point of leaving the place.

"That news is too good to be true," said Burt. "I expect they will be up to some of their dirty tricks now sure."

For about three hours the little company conversed together in whispers, and then once more Jack ascended to the lookout. He came down in less than fifteen minutes

and reported that there was not an Indian anywhere in sight. All were gone.

Burt shook his head, but Jack felt sure they were gone for good, and was most anxious to go out and get a breath of fresh air, as he said.

Burt would not permit this, for he had no faith in the seeming retreat of the Apaches.

The morning wore away, and evening came.

"Now," said Jack, "you won't mind my going out. I'll take the greatest care, and if I see a single redskin, will beat a retreat in double quick time."

"Well, go, if you must," said Burt, with a sigh; "but mind! it's against my wishes and better judgment."

"Oh! never fear for me, old fellow; you're a little nervous now, because you are weak and sick. If you were well, you'd be the first to go with me," and with a wave of the hand Jack made his way through the opening to the outer world.

His good sense told him that he should use the utmost care, and so he kept behind the underbrush until he came in sight of the deserted camp. He then raised himself up and looked eagerly about him.

He was armed with a rifle, a tomahawk and a knife, and felt that he was able to hold his own against any Indian that ever walked; but when suddenly he found himself face to face with three powerful braves, he concluded that his time had come.

But Jack, although the odds were so strongly against him, determined to die game; and as the savages approached with diabolical smiles upon their faces, he sprang back and leveled his rifle.

"Keep off! you red imps of perdition!" he cried, "or I'll make daylight shine through you in less than no time."

The Indians came to a stand, and seemed a little surprised. Then they consulted together in a low tone.

Suddenly one of them turned quickly, at the same time drawing his tomahawk from his belt.

Jack was on the alert, and when the next moment the weapon came whizzing through the air, he sprang out of the way. Then his rifle rang out, and with a wild yell the savage staggered forward and fell to the ground, dead.

But his was not the only yell; the others joined in, and with uplifted weapons sprang toward the boy.

Jack, of course, had no time to retreat, or even to again make use of his rifle; but clubbing it, he manfully defended himself.

At length he succeeded in killing one of his opponents, but the next moment was felled to the ground by the remaining savage.

The brave boy was unconscious, and knew no more for several hours.

When he came to himself he was lying upon the ground in the midst of the Indian camp, some five miles further up the river.

Jack looked about him; other Indians had joined the band that had been encamped near the tree house, and there were no less than a hundred in all. A chief was also with them; Jack quickly recognized him. It was Flying Horse.

After a time an Indian noticed that Jack had come to, and at once informed the chief.

Flying Horse and one or two others came to the spot where Jack was lying.

"Get up," said the chief.

Jack attempted to rise, but a deathly sickness came over him, and he fell back to the ground.

"Get up, I say," exclaimed the chief, savagely.

Jack did not stir.

"Kick him," said Flying Horse.

This order was readily obeyed by those near.

Still the pale-face boy did not move.

"He dead," said one of the braves, at length.

"That bad," said the chief, hastily stooping down. But at that moment a low moan escaped from Jack's lips.

"No dead, he all right by-me-by," the chief muttered;

and presently, to confirm his words, Jack opened his eyes and sat up.

"Get up on feet," commanded Flying Horse, and after one or two ineffectual efforts the boy obeyed.

"Who come into Apache camp, and steal our food and blankets, and kill my young men?" demanded the chief sternly.

"It was me," said Jack proudly.

"Very small boy, heap big liar," grunted the red warrior.

"Liar yourself," exclaimed Jack, hotly; "I killed every one on 'em myself, and carried off all the plunder."

The chief looked at the boy with lowering brow.

"You no tell the truth, we burn you alive," he hissed.

"I have told you the truth," insisted Jack.

"Where one other boy, more big as you?" asked Flying Horse.

"I can't tell you," said Jack, with a vigorous shake of the head.

The Indians now conferred together for some time, and then, after briefly ordering the boy to be firmly bound to a stake, Flying Horse walked haughtily away, closely followed by his friends.

Jack was in no enviable position. The wound on his head pained him terribly, and he was frightfully weak from loss of blood. Again, he was in the very midst of a strong Indian camp, firmly bound to a stake, ay, so firmly bound that the cords fairly cut into his flesh, and hence, he could see no chance for escape.

The prospect before him was not bright. He felt that before the rising of another sun, all that would be left of him would be a heap of ashes.

Ah! if he had only followed his elder brother's advice. If he had only heeded his earnest words, he would not be there now.

But regrets were useless; there was only one thing left for him to do, and that was to die like a MAN, or at least, like the brave boy he had declared himself to be, and this he swore to himself he would do.

He had hardly come to this conclusion when the squaws began to gather and heap up fagots of wood about him.

CHAPTER XII.

ZOLA TO THE RESCUE.

For some moments after Jack left them no one in the hollow tree spoke. A feeling of dread seemed to have settled upon all.

At length Burt moved uneasily.

"What is it, dear?" asked Zola, anxiously.

"I believe I shall go crazy unless I know what's become of that boy," said the sufferer.

Zola was in a quandary. She did not know just how to act. It would hardly do to go out herself, and she could not believe it best to send Scip, even if he dared to go.

Presently a thought struck her.

"Scip," she said, eagerly, "you can climb?"

"Specs I can, Miss Zola."

"Then make your way up to that hole, just as you saw Jack do it, and let us know all that's going on outside."

"It's de nigger dat kin do dat, Miss Zola—shuah," and Scip instantly set to work.

Thanks to Jack, there was no lack of knives, and so he was quickly on his way toward the lofty lookout.

He reached the hole in time to see Jack rise up in the underbrush and peer off eagerly toward the deserted camp.

A moment later he saw the three savages appear, and he was so overcome by the sight that he nearly dropped from his perch with fright.

He saw the short but decisive battle, and when the last of the three redskins had carried the unconscious boy away, he hurried down, with bulging eyes and slate-colored cheeks.

"What's the matter?" asked Burt, in an agony of suspense, even before Scip had reached the ground.

"Mas'r Jack hab dun gone an' killed two Injuns," re-

sponded the darkey, with chattering teeth, "an' ernuther Injun, he's dun gone an' killed Mas'r Jack, shuah."

"Killed Jack, Scip? Are you sure of what you say?" asked Burt, in a tone of horror.

"Spect I is, Mas'r Burt. Seed dat red nigger frow his little hatchet plumb at his head. Den seed Mas'r Jack fall, all kivered wif blood."

"Oh, my God!" groaned Burt, "why did I let him go, when I was sure it would be so?"

"Don't give way so, dear," said Zola, earnestly. "It may not be as bad as it looks. He may not be dead, you know."

Burt shook his head gloomily.

"An Apache never leaves his work half done, Zola," he said.

"Well, then, we must recover the body, that's all," exclaimed the brave girl, resolutely.

"Yer can't do dat, Miss Zola," said Scip, with an emphatic nod.

"And why not, pray?" asked both she and Burt in a breath.

"'Case dat red nigger dun gone an' toted him away."

"Ah!" exclaimed Burt, in a somewhat relieved tone, "in that case he may not be dead."

"I was sure of it," said Zola, cheerfully; "and now we must manage in some way to rescue him. Which way did the Indian go, Scip?"

"Up de ribber," responded the black boy.

Zola let her head fall forward on her bosom, and for some time was buried in thought. At length, as she looked up, she murmured:

"We can do nothing until night comes—that's certain; but then we must act."

"What do you propose to do, Zola?" asked Burt, anxiously.

"You shall see by and by, but you must ask no questions now," she responded with a smile; "and now you must be a good boy, and mind whatever I say."

The time passed heavily until evening, and then Zola, calling Scip one side, questioned him as follows:

"You think a heap of Master Jack, Scip?"

"Lor! yes, Miss Zola, a big heap."

"You would like to help rescue him from the savages, and so save him from being tortured and murdered?"

"Ye—ye—yes, Miss Zola; I—I reckons I would."

"Well, you know how to swim?"

"Yes, miss."

"And you could catch that pony on the other side of the river?"

"Spect as how I could, Miss Zola."

"Well, Jack told you where he left the bridle. Now you swim across the river, catch the pony and bring it to me. That is all I shall ask of you. The rest I shall do myself."

Scip looked at the beautiful and brave girl with round, big eyes, and then, in a voice of wonder, asked:

"Is yer gwine to fight de Injuns, Miss Zola?"

It's very possible I shall have to," laughed the girl; "but come, you must hurry and get me the pony, or there won't be anything to fight for."

"All right; I'll get him, shuah," and the boy hurried off toward the river.

Zola now made her preparations for her daring undertaking. She rearranged her dress, fastened a belt about her waist, and into this thrust both a tomahawk and knife.

She also selected the lightest of the rifles and sight, because there was no pistols, the use of which she well understood.

All her preparations were at length made, but still Scip did not return.

She began to grow impatient. What could detain him? She was just on the point of going out to see when she heard a low whistle.

"It's all right," she murmured, in a tone of satisfaction, and, approaching Burt and kissing him, she said:

"I am going away for a little while, but you need not

worry. I shall be back by-and-by, and I hope to have good news for you."

"But, Zola!" exclaimed Burt, anxiously.

"I haven't time to talk with you now, dear old fellow; but when I come back I will listen to all you have to say," and with a light laugh the brave girl was gone.

On the outside she found Scip holding the pony.

Almost in an instant she was on its back.

"Now, then, Scip," she said, as she seized the bridle, "don't you say one word to Burt about where I've gone, for if you do it may kill him. I shall be back some time between this and morning, sure."

"All right, Miss Zola; I won't say a word," said Scip.

"If he asks you anything about it you must change the subject; and now, good-night," and she rode off into the darkness.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CHASE—THE TERRIBLE PLUNGE.

ZOLA directed her course up the river, taking the greatest care to guard against surprise.

For five miles she followed the trail without seeing anything to attract her attention, when all at once she discovered the light of a camp-fire, and a moment later she saw two more.

She now felt certain that she was in the immediate neighborhood of the Indian camps; so, leaving the trail, she plunged into the forest, approaching the place with the utmost caution, with the light of the fires for a guide.

At length she was as near as she dared to approach with the horse, so dismounting, she made him fast in the underbrush, and herself advanced for a better view.

As good luck would have it, she had come upon the camp directly opposite the spot where poor Jack was bound to the stake, and she saw the ugly-looking squaws at their demon-like work.

She looked in every direction, in order to take in the full situation.

There were plenty of bucks around but most of them were quite at the other end of the camp. There was also any number of ponies, but these too were at some distance, so that, if she could make a bold and decided dash, she might not only free Jack, but carry him off in triumph.

It was worth trying for, and she could no more than fail.

She placed the rifle against a tree, where it would be handy to pick up on her way back, and then seizing her tomahawk in one hand and her knife in the other, she sprang forward, noiselessly and swiftly.

There were at least a dozen squaws heaping up the wood about the captive boy; but not one of them saw Zola until she was in their very midst, severing Jack's bonds.

Then such a wild chorus of yells as went up! And all at the same moment flew at the daring girl.

She heeded them not until one became too troublesome, and then lifting her tomahawk, she buried it in her skull; the next moment she had cut the last cord, and Jack was free.

But the danger was by no means over; in fact, it was but just begun.

The squaws now attacked both the whites, and with the utmost fury, at the same time calling upon the bucks to hasten to their aid.

"Here, Jack!" exclaimed Zola, "take this knife, and use it, too, and follow me as fast as possible to yonder tree; there I have left a rifle, and a little beyond is the pony that fetched me here."

"Good!" exclaimed Jack, all his courage and spirits returning with the prospect of life and liberty; "you're a brave girl, Zola, and if Burt don't marry you I shall."

"Remember," laughed the girl, as she sent a squaw to grass with her tomahawk, "it takes two to make a bargain; and now hurry, Jack! for there comes the bucks—fifty of them, at least."

By this time the two had reached the tree, and Jack was in possession of the rifle. This was a good thing for them, for he only had to point it at the squaws to induce them to fall back.

But a new danger now threatened them; as they drew near the thicket in which the pony was concealed more than a dozen shots were fired at them. Another thing, Jack was so weak and in such pain that he could hardly keep upon his legs.

Zola led the pony out, and by a superhuman effort helped Jack upon his back, then lightly she sprang up in front of him, and seized the bridle.

"Now," she said, "you must hold on to me, and carry the rifle; I'll do the rest. The Apache shan't burn you this time, Master Jack," and she started the strong pony down the trail.

Meantime the Indians had not been idle. While the squaws were howling over three of their number who had been slain, the bucks had rushed for their ponies, and before Zola and Jack had rode a hundred yards, not less than thirty were after them.

The chase soon became a desperate one, and it seemed impossible that the pursued could escape.

At length a powerful brave—a brother of Flying Horse—drew uncomfortably near. He even fired a shot that grazed Jack's head.

Zola dropped the bridle upon the pony's neck, and took the rifle from Jack's hand. She turned suddenly, and at the same instant fired.

The powerful Indian dropped to the ground like a sack of meal.

A wild yell of consternation went up from the other braves, and they stopped for a moment about the dying chief.

The fleeing whites took advantage of this diversion and hurried on.

"After them! after them!" suddenly cried a terrible voice in the midst of the Indians, and then all knew that Flying Horse was with them, and now once more the chase commenced in deadly earnest.

On and on went the pony with its double load, and on and on thundered the band of mounted Indians after them.

There was no use thinking of returning to the tree, that was entirely out of the question. There was one chance for them now, and only one; they must get to the other side of the river.

But the Apaches were pressing them closely. If the attempt was to be made at all it must be made at once.

Satisfied on this point, Zola turned her horse's head toward the river.

Nearer and nearer they approached the dark waters that were to give them liberty or a grave.

Just as the stream came into view, the round silver moon burst forth from a cloud and lit up the whole scene.

An exclamation of horror burst from the lips of both Zola and Jack, while loud shouts of joy ascended from the Apaches.

They were on the very brink of a precipice, more than thirty-five feet high, with the angry, rushing waters below.

What should they do? There was but a single instant to choose, for the howling red fiends were close behind, and death seemed inevitable any way.

"Jack, hold on tight," exclaimed Zola, in a firm, determined voice, "for we are going over that precipice," and with all her might she urged the pony forward.

The next instant he made the terrible plunge.

CHAPTER XIV.

A BLOODY FIGHT—DEATH OF FLYING HORSE.

YELLS of astonishment went up from both sides of the river at Zola's daring act; but the Indians were so much taken up with the fugitives that they did not notice the cries from the other side.

Quickly they dismounted, and, rifles in hand, rushed to

the brink of the bluff to watch for the coming up of the brave pair.

At length they appeared, the horse first, Jack, clinging to his tail, next, and Zola last.

To the astonishment of the redskins, neither the pony nor his riders seemed to have suffered by the terrible leap.

"Fire upon them! Fire upon them!" yelled Flying Horse, and, setting the example, he sent a bullet at Jack's head.

It flattened itself upon the water close by his side.

Then shot after shot was fired; but the little pony was doing nobly, and soon all three were nearing the other bank.

"After them! After them! they must not get away," cried the chief. "Quick! go above the cliff and cross there."

Had the blood-thirsty Flying Horse waited a moment before giving this order, he might not have been in such a hurry to have his band cross the river, for he would have seen several dark figures approach the river bank and assist the noble little pony and his two exhausted riders to land.

"Why, father!" exclaimed Zola, throwing her arms about the neck of the old trapper, who had helped her out, "how glad I am to see you."

"And I you, my child, whom I never expected to see more," said old Sol, with a quiver in his voice, "and here's your old friend Giles waiting to speak with you."

"Ah! Uncle Giles, it's always pleasant to see you, but never more so than now," said Zola, advancing to meet her father's friend.

Gray Giles, with tears of joy in his eyes, put out his arms, and the next moment Zola was folded in a warm embrace.

"What has become of poor Jack?" she asked, as soon as the old trapper released her.

"There, behind that thicket," responded her father, "and his friends are with him."

"What! did his parents escape?"

"Yes; and both are here."

"And—and my mother? and dear Ned?"

"Both alive and well, thank God! How I wish I could say as much for many of our neighbors. But hark! there come the Apaches. Who is leading them to-night, Zola?"

"Flying Horse, the chief."

"Good! and now for revenge. Giles, you notify the soldiers, and Zola, you go to your mother and the Brownlows yonder."

Zola obeyed.

A few moments later she heard the steady tramp, tramp, tramp of the regular troops of the United States.

Then there was a halt, and all was still.

Suddenly the stillness was broken by the loud discharge of rifle-shots, and then mortal yells of agony arose upon the air.

The fight was a terrible one. At first the Indians fought bravely, because deperately, but at length a panic seized them, and then the battle became a perfect slaughter.

It was Sol Swayne who had caused the panic, and it was simply done. He went forward with the troops, who halted in the underbrush until the Indians were landed, and then when the fight began, he gave all his attention to finding Flying Horse.

He discovered him at last, urging on his warriors with the eloquence of despair.

He raised his rifle and fired.

The chief threw his arms wildly above his head for a moment, and then dropped heavily from his saddle.

He was dead, and from that moment the savages no longer had the heart to fight. All permitted themselves to be killed or captured.

Mr. Brownlow returned to the spot where their loved ones were anxiously waiting.

"Have the Indians all gone," asked Zola, eagerly, when she saw them approaching.

"Gone to kingdom come, most of 'em," responded her father, laconically.

"And Flying Horse?"

"Like the others—dead."

CHAPTER XV.

CONCLUSION.

"You must let me speak now," said Mr. Brownlow, who was laboring under great anxiety. "Jack says that his brother is alive, but wounded. How badly is he wounded, Zola?"

"I fear quite badly," said the young girl; "at least, he is suffering for the want of a skillful surgeon."

The officer in command of the troops from the fort came up at this moment.

"Who is that of whom you are speaking!" he asked.

"My son, Burton," responded Mr. Brownlow. "It seems he was wounded by the Indians some nights since, and now lies hidden in a hollow tree on the other side of the river."

"What! do you mean the young man they call Bold Burt?" asked the officer.

"The same, sir."

"Then our surgeon, and a portion of our men, shall go with you to his retreat, and everything that can be done for his comfort shall be, that I promise you."

"O, thank you, sir!" exclaimed Zola, out of the fullness of her heart.

"Oh-ho!" mused the officer, "so that's the direction in which the wind blows, eh?" and he gazed upon the young girl with a new interest.

Orders were now given to cross the river, and Jack was placed in charge of a stout trooper, who agreed to see him safely over.

An hour later, just as the first faint streaks of dawn appeared in the east, the little troop arrive in the neighborhood of the hollow tree.

Burt and Scip were awake; the fact is, Burt was too anxious to sleep himself, and he would not let his companion "Just take another lookout, Scip," he said, "and see if you can't see or hear her somewhere."

Scip cautiously thrust his black head through the opening.

The sound of the advancing horses reached his ears, and from the place where he lay he could just catch a glimpse of their legs as they came hurrying along.

He quickly drew in his head and sprang upon the shelf alongside of Burt.

"Goramity! Mas'r Burt," he exclaimed, "all de Injuns in de country am out dar, shuah, 'cause I seed dar dirty red legs."

"Are the Indians really coming, Scip?" asked Burt, anxiously.

"Fur sartin shuah, Mas'r Burt. I seed 'em wif dese yer bery eyes," and the black boy looked as solemn as an owl.

At that moment their attention was drawn toward the entrance to their hiding place.

"Oh, Lordy! Mas'r Burt," cried Scip, in abject terror, "hyer comes one ob dem now, an' de ugliest ob 'em all; I knows it."

"I'll never forgive you for that, Scip Stan," exclaimed the sweet, ringing voice of Zola Swayne, and the next moment she was upon the shelf of earth with her lover's head in her arms.

"It's all right, darling," she cried, tenderly. "I saved Jack, and now I've brought your father and mother, as well as the surgeon at the fort, to see you."

"Good Heavens! Zola, how is it that you accomplish such wonders? Is it because you love me?"

"That does a great deal, Burt, but most of what has now happened came about very naturally. I'll tell you all

about it another time, but now you must prepare to receive your friends."

"Then let me be taken outside, I long to breathe the fresh air again."

This was but natural, and two soldiers entered the place and gently lifted him out.

Then a happy meeting took place.

Scip was fairly frantic with joy. He danced, he turned cart-wheels and stood upon his head, and at last could only be induced to keep upon his feet when Jack gravely told

him that if he remained much longer on his head his brain would have a tendency to settle there.

The short and bloody war with the Apaches was practically over, the strength of the Indians was broken.

Sol Swayne, though not wholly over the effects of his wound, went to work, with Gray Giles to assist him, and built another shanty for his family. And that same Fall still another shanty was built in the immediate neighborhood, and it is now occupied by Bold Burt and his wife, ZOLA, THE OLD TRAPPER'S DAUGHTER.

[THE END.]

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